Beautiful Creature

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Beautiful Creature

by TigerPrawn

Summary

Two lonely souls find each other

Notes

NB: A quick clarification on the tags - until Will meets Hannibal it has no idea what gender is and doesn't know whether it is male or female. It's body is intersex (in a mer-anatomy way). Will is often referred to as "it" because it is viewed as a creature of unknown gender. Will's gender is... complex. The pronouns are often, and purposefully, mixed up.

Chapter 1

As a child growing up in a fishing village to a father who was a builder of boats, Will Graham spent a lot of time in the warm ocean. He could swim before he could walk, and if his family travelled too far from the water he would cry. As he grew, it became common knowledge amongst the villagers that young Will was at one with the water, so much so some joked that he was a nymph.

Because truly, there was something about the boy. A strangeness, something extraordinary. The way he looked, a strikingly handsome boy, yet as pretty as any girl. And the way he spoke of things made quite clear he had little understanding of how the world was divided between the menfolk and the womenfolk.

He made people uncomfortable, and so they would just smile and nod and say “oh yes, that Graham boy, he’s away with the nymphs,” with gentle laughter to hide their discomfort. The

boy was not quite of the world of men, it seemed.

Therefore, it wasn't a surprise at all when the child, barely ten years old, was lost to the sea.

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Hannibal walked down from his house to the jetty over the rocks, out into the straits. Old and worn now. Netted pole in hand, he used it to push back some of the overgrown grass.

The path itself was easy. Shallow, steady steps cut into the centuries of compacted sand and mud. A well worn route by generations of those who had served his family. It lead the short way down to the jetty, but also to the embankment in general, beyond that the rocks and then the water.

Beyond that still the sea cliffs that sheltered the land from the ocean.

The once great house was almost a ruin now and he lived there with only the memories of long dead family and staff who had deserted. The last of those who had served his father had moved on when he was still a youth of twenty, leaving him to his solitude and his responsibilities.

This would be his eleventh year doing this alone. Surveying and maintaining the water ways through the straits as his family's staff had done for generations. The staff had managed it for all his living memory though both he and his sister, as their father before them, had been taken down and given an understanding of the responsibility.

Keep the straits clear. Ensuring the safety of the trade boats coming in and out of the secluded bay, therefore ensuring the continued prosperity of the resource rich township of Baltimore Bay.

Of course, as a child his father had brought him here and made him help the staff, shown him everything he needed to do to keep the waterway clear. As was the responsibility of his family, no matter who in the household ensured it. Now it was his responsibility alone.

He pulled his thick cloak around him, the wind biting as it blew along the strait with an early morning chill.

There was a sort of bleak beauty about the place that he never tired of. So much so that he spent a lot of time sat on the embankment by the water along from the jetty and closer to the opening out to sea, shaded under the trees there. Perhaps the shallow and rocky mouth out into the open ocean represented a freedom he'd never have thought to desire. But either way he enjoyed the solitude of it. He would sit on the jetty for a while and appraise, before patrolling the embankment for a better view and then, all being well, he would sit and monitor as the boats came and went.

If he were not there someone else would do this, he was sure.

If he died, if he *had* died with his parents and sister, then someone would have eventually come. The town would have claimed the traditional lands of the family for which he was the last in line. Someone would come if they wanted the town to continue to thrive.

For it was only this waterway that allowed its continued prosperity. Leading from the ocean that was cut off by cliffs, into the open bay and harbour of the secluded and beautiful town. Legend had it that the land was enchanted, blessed. Even that his own family many centuries before, had been visited by nymphs that once inhabited the harbour and tasked with this duty for the good of mortals and mythical creatures alike.

These lands were so full of legends. Colourful but childish.

The water was still today, the ocean beyond was calm and so the tidal pull was just a slow ebb. Hannibal lost himself to the sound of the water gently lapping at the rocks. He took up his paper and ink and began to paint out the scene before him, only not exactly the sight before him. The landscape was the same, but as was his way, he added in nymphs and other creatures that were sure to have once inhabited this place, if the legends were true.

It was a louder splash of the water that drew his attention.

The water still flowed slowly and so it couldn't have been the force of the tide against the rocks, and there were no boats sailing through the narrow straits at that time.

Hannibal frowned and watched the water for a moment longer before looking back down at his work.

For the whole week the straits remained calm, the perfect time of year for bringing boats through. And so that happened, a few a day taking goods in and out of the secluded harbour under Hannibal's watchful eye. It wouldn't do for any of them to lose cargo in the straits that might hinder others.

Hannibal sat and watched and painted. And occasionally his attention was drawn back to the water by splashes that became so frequent that he had to assume that some cargo had been lost. Perhaps a barrel of wine, perhaps a small, buoyant chest.

He set his art aside and eased himself down the embankments and onto the rocks, climbing over them along the water's edge, trying to get sight of what it might be so he could manage it's removal.

But there was nothing. Nor any further sounds.

Until there was.

A splash so close, Hannibal would have startled if he was a man of a different disposition. Even so, he turned quick enough that he nearly overbalanced, saving himself from falling at first. But then he saw it.

A flick of a tail.

A large fish or perhaps even a small porpoise. They only ever had small schools in the bay, and the larger fish and mammals never ventured past the jagged rocks at the mouth of the straits that the boats had to navigate.

It intrigued him enough to move forward, not noticing the patch of wet moss on the rock in an uncharacteristic lack of attention, until his foot slipped on it. He landed facedown on the rocks, his hands out to the impact, but the breath knocked out of him as he gazed into the water he'd narrowly avoided falling into.

Hannibal started to push off, to rise from the rocks, his reflection rippling in the water as he looked down.

And then it blinked.

Hannibal froze, rigid and breath completely still as he peered down into the water. A face not his own slowly rising to the surface.

The face was young and beautiful, ethereal. Curly hair that seemed dark but lightened almost to a sunkissed blonde at the ends, swirled around the face. Eyes that seemed green, blue and grey at the same moment.

It was almost to the surface, almost close enough that Hannibal might be able to reach down and touch the soft, pale lips.

And then it was gone.

Another splash and Hannibal could see something moving through the water, not close enough to the surface to make out. But then there was a flick of tail again, and it sped towards the open sea.

Truly Uninspired

[Art by the wonderful TrulyUninspired

*

It was routine for Hannibal to sit by the straits at this time of the year, watching the boats come and go at this busy time. But he now sat closer to the edge of the embankment where it dropped down to the rocks.

Every slight movement caught his eye.

Every splash on the still waters.

It was almost a month before he saw the beautiful creature again. The tail again, glistening, shimmering as it breached the surface and submerged once more.

Hannibal was usually a stoic man, calm and in control of his responses. So it was a surprise to himself that he had become invested in seeing the wondrous vision again, that he scrambled down to the rocks at the first sight of it.

Whilst his body responded to the creature, his mind supplied warnings. Long old tales of sirens and nymphs that made him question whether his reaction was wholly his own or some sort of enchantment.

Hannibal found he didn't care.

He just cared to see it again, to talk, maybe to touch.

His heart was thudding in his chest as he made it down to the rocks and lay flat on them so that he was able to dangle a hand over into the water. All the while his eyes scanned the surface up and down the straits, looking for another sign.

"I know you're there. I saw you," his tone was quiet, not assuming that such a creature would be able to hear him at all under the water. But it felt like something that he needed to say aloud.

Hannibal watched the water until the sun went down, changing his position on the rocks and eventually returning to the embankment. Feeling all the while that though he couldn't see the creature, he was being watched.

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Another three weeks passed and the waters became a little choppy as they sometimes did this time of the year, making it harder to see or hear whether the creature was there.

Far from discourage Hannibal had now made it routine to sit on the rocks rather than the embankment or jetty. Keeping watch and talking.

He told the water the story of his family, how they came to be the keepers of these straits. He spoke of the long told legends of the secluded town, of it having been blessed by land and sea gods alike. He described the town, the surrounding villages, the mountains that cut much off this land off from the wider country.

Eventually he began to recount the tragedy that had befallen his family.

The raid by sea had taken all of those in Baltimore Bay by surprise. It would have been much worse had they not had to come through the straits, had they not been repelled on Lecter land.

“The mansion was almost completely destroyed, only the one wing remains intact. My mother tried to escape into the woods with my sister and I, but we were set upon. Raiders killed my parents, my sister, most of the staff, before the townsfolk arrived and cut them down. The remaining staff left by over the years, I became a man very quickly.”

Hannibal’s tone was low, solemn. He fought down the memories that the retelling had conjured. Not of the raid or the hard years that followed, but of his little sister at play, his parents dancing, himself laughing - the happy days before it happened.

He swallowed back the threatening tears and shook his head.

He hadn’t ever spoken much of this aloud before, and now he felt the pain of having done so.

It was enough for one day.

Hannibal rose, pulling his cloak around him with the intent to head back to the mansion. But a voice stopped him.

“You have been alone since?”

It was a small voice. Musically high but quiet with disuse.

Hannibal swallowed, his heart giving a hard thud and his palms beginning to sweat. He looked down and could see slim fingers curled over the rock, The flesh seemed almost translucent with its blue-green tinge, the fingers themselves quite dainty.

“I… For the most part, yes.” Hannibal replied, remaining still - not wanting to frighten the creature away.

There was a splash and the fingers were gone, water rippling as Hannibal glimpsed the tail before it was gone again.

He let out a shaky breath and felt something quite warm and electric coarse through his veins.

*

Hannibal was sure the creature was there more often than it let itself be seen. But over the weeks as the weather began to warm even further, Hannibal told stories about the town, about his own life, spoke of books he’d read and music he liked to play. Sometimes when he recanted these things, fingers gripped delicately at the side of the rock.

The creature had barely spoken since that first time, asking one word questions here or there. And Hannibal didn’t try to creep forward and get a better look, he just enjoyed the company.

One particularly sunny day, the play of children in the bay could be heard, carried on the breeze down the straits to him. It brought a bittersweet smile to his face.

“Mischa, my sister, she would drag me down to the bay so that we could paddle in the water there-”

“You miss her.”

The gentle words, an acknowledgement not a question, cut Hannibal off.

Most questions the creature had had before were for clarity, if it was uncertain of Hannibal’s meaning, or something item he described. This was unexpected.

“Very much. I miss them all, but she was… she was special. She had such spirit to her.”

When the water splashed Hannibal felt his heart sink, expecting to see a flash of tail and know the creature was gone again. But this didn’t happen. Instead the creature pulled itself up against the rock, only a little way out of the water but enough for them to make eye contact.

The creature was more breathtaking than Hannibal’s memory had suggested. With hair curled and wet, face smooth and pale, Hannibal was still unsure as to whether the creature were male or female. Perhaps, being a magical creature it might be both or neither.

“I’m lonely sometimes.” The creature told Hannibal. “Listening to you makes me feel less alone.”

The words seemed deliberate, carefully chosen. The creature’s gaze did not waiver as it waited for a response from Hannibal.

“I… T-talking to you makes me feel less alone too.”

The faintest of smiles crossed the creature’s face and pink rose on it’s cheeks as it blushed at the attention. Hannibal had barely a chance to observe this then it was gone. The creature had turned in an instant and pushed off from the rock. It had splashed down, tail swishing and then was gone, as usual.

A hopeful feeling of elation radiated through Hannibal’s chest.

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The weather was good and the harvest had been bountiful, and for three weeks boats braved the straits at an increased rate as they sought to trade with the abundant town before the summer ended.

Times like this Hannibal was always vigilant. It only took one small piece of cargo to be lost from the boat, or some flotsum and jetsum to wash into the path of another, that would cause damage and danger.

He had no expectation of seeing the creature whilst the waters were so busy, but he had to admit to worrying all the same. What if it was swept into the path of a boat? What if sailors saw it and tried to capture it?

After a particularly busy day Hannibal was weary. The warm weather had made him drowsy and a boat had managed to lose several poorly tethered and overloaded casks. Three had fallen from the small vessel charged with ferrying them to a ship that waited beyond the straits in the open water. They had been half way through and Hannibal felt it was good fortune that it was near enough to where he kept his vigil, that it didn't take him long to respond.

Hannibal grabbed up the hooked and netted pole that lay on the embankment and made his way along the rocks, as close as he could get to the boat. He was grateful at least that they had been sailing close to the embankment.

It took Hannibal a few attempts to hook the rope of the first cask, using the pole to push it back towards the boat so that they might recover their cargo before it caused problems for anyone else.

At least the sun was getting low. This would be the last boat through today.

Once all the casks were recovered, the sailors raised their hands in thanks and set back along the straits. Hannibal stood and watched, glad to see it go.

He was about to leave when something in the water caught his eye. A cask they had missed, but it was broken up. It must have hit a rock when it fell from the boat. Either way the contents had leaked into the water and now it was but a broken up shell. Hannibal sighed and took up the poll one more with the intention of dragging the broken cask to the rocks so he could remove it.

It wasn't quite out of reach but it was a stretch. He would have made it, would have hooked the remnants and pulled them in nicely if he hadn't fallen.

If there hadn't been a rough tug on the pole.

It was more so the unexpectedness than the force of the pull that had Hannibal lose his footing. He tried to right himself but it was no good. At least he managed to turn as he fell, falling into the water on his back and submerging slowly.

Hannibal opened his eyes, the initial sting of the water made him squeeze them shut again. But once he opened once more he saw the flash of something.

More than tail this time, this time there was flesh as it rushed by him.

He tried to turn in the water to see the creature, but as he did so it turned and they came face to face.

The creature was as beautiful as had already been impressed upon him. But in the water, beautiful failed to adequately describe the creature.

Curly hair floated in the water, delicately framing its face almost tendril like. Its skin was delicate, pale and almost translucent. Hannibal wanted to reach out and touch it, and perhaps the creature sensed that for all of a sudden it retreated backwards just beyond reach as it floated there studying Hannibal.

Before Hannibal could even think another thing, he realised he'd run out of breath.

He scrambled for the surface and breached, sucking in a deep breath as he pushed himself as far out of the water as he could before sinking back down. He remained treading water for a moment assuming the creature had fled once more, but then he felt cold hands on his waist and forward motion.

Hannibal trembled at the touch. It had rarely had contact like this with other people, and this was not a person… Its hands were cold, a strange tingling cold that seeped through Hannibal's shirt and to his skin. It was odder still that the cold press started to feel warm.

Before he had chance to consider further, they were at the rocks and those hands lifted, pushing Hannibal up until he was able to crawl out of the water and collapse there, panting. He was relieved to see that the hands gripped the side of the rocks, as they had so many times before, and didn't leave.

"You're not made for the water," the creature sounded disappointed.

"I… no…" Hannibal agreed, a forlorn feeling settling in his chest.

Hannibal sat up on the rock, able to look down and see the hands, the arms, the upper half of the beautiful face, eyes looking up at him.

It took an effort to look away, drawing his attention to the broken cask and his pole floating aside it.

He looked back down, putting the tug and the words together.

"You pulled me in," Hannibal said.

The nod of the creature's head was slow and shy.

"... To see if I was made for the water?"

Another slow nod, and Hannibal was sure there was a darkening of blush on the top of it's cheeks.

"Why?" Hannibal asked, his heart beating faster than it really should be.

The creature frowned thoughtfully before lifting out of the water enough so that it's whole head was now visible, sad expression and all.

"Because I'm lonely."

*

Hannibal had been too stunned by the response that day to even protest the creature's immediate departure - watching its body glide back into the water with only a flick of the tail.

His heart had raced. It had been racing every day since the creature had revealed itself. Since he had started talking to the water, unsure whether it was listening.

He started each day by saying he was lonely too and explaining more about his family and staff that he missed. He said his name often, and the names of those he had known. The few times he'd been almost close with people in the town, only to find it too overwhelming. The time he lost his virginity to one of the farmgirls he bought produce from in the barn on her family property. The time he lost his virginity again to the carpenter's son who had come to fix fences on the property.

It was that day that the creature made itself known again, almost two weeks after Hannibal had been pulled into the water.

"What was it like?" The quiet and curious voice sounded over the top of the gentle laps of the water against the rocks. The creature hesitated before blinking wide eyes and adding, "Hannibal."

Hannibal startled at the question and the sweet familiarity. He was unsure how to answer it, not least because it hadn't occurred to him to consider whether or not the creature was sexual. Its lower half resembled a fish or porpoise, as human-like as its face might be.

"It was… intimate…" Hannibal replied, moving forward on the rocks so he could peer over at the creature.

Their eyes met and the creature blinked, only its eyes visible above the water.

"Do you… What's your name?" Hannibal asked tentatively, strangely unsurprised when the creature cocked its head and rose enough to have its mouth above water once more.

"I um… I don't need one," It dismissed Hannibal's question as though he'd asked something ridiculous, before it continued. "I've never… seen anyone that looks so similar to me before… Um…" the creature's eyes darted away as it spoke. "Someone so pale. The others… in the boats they are always so um… they are sunkissed or darker. I thought…"

The creature's nervousness was so endearing Hannibal couldn't help but reach a hand down, not even considering what he was doing until he stroked a stray lock from its face, noticing the flutter of gills almost behind the creature's ears.

The speed at which the creature recoiled and hissed at Hannibal was both extraordinary and terrifying. With the hiss it revealed a mouthful of teeth that were sharp and deadly. Fins rose on its arms and back as though to make itself look more intimidating and ward off predators.

"I'm sorry… I apologise… I…" Hannibal stumbled over his words, finding himself mortified at the thought of offending the creature, and at worst driving it away.

The creature eyed him warily, frowning. Considering.

"I thought you were made for the water too because you are so pale," the words were accusatory, as though Hannibal had tried to trick the creature.

He shook his head and held up placating hands, "No, I… I stay indoors, or in the shade. I stay covered. I have only started to sit closer to the water since I met you…"

A hopeful look darted across the creature's face and was gone again, though it clearly was considering Hannibal's words.

With a final frown it turned and dove back into the water, out of sight.

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Hannibal continued to return to the water's edge day after day. Something he knew from his visits into the town for supplies, was now being noted and commented upon.

So he took to taking a fishing line with him. They would surely think nothing gossip worthy of a man fishing?

He had been doing this perhaps two weeks when his line was pulled.

It was a sharp tug and then smaller ones, as though the line were being toyed with by some devious fish. A fish he had never hoped to catch with an unbaited line. All the same Hannibal picked up the pole and pulled it back, only to have it tugged so sharply that it flew from his hands and into the water.

Hannibal watched it float before him, and then his attention was drawn to the edge of the rocks and the delicate hands creeping up over to cling to them.

His breath caught in his throat.

Hannibal had thought of meeting the creature again, apologising and swearing never to reach for it again. Anything to not lose it's company.

When it came to it though, all he was able to say were rushed words as he moved to the edge to look over and utter them directly into its beautiful face.

"I missed you."

The creature's eyes went wide and then blinked. A moment later they creased and Hannibal didn't need for it to bring the rest of its face above water to know it was smiling.

But it did all the same, speaking softly and biting at its lower lip.

"I was scared. I've never… But I liked you touching me," it swallowed and looked at him with a burning intensity, "would you do it again?"

Hannibal took in a shuddering breath and nodded.

The creature seemed pleased but all the same it let go of the rocks and began to drift back in the water. When it was more than an arm's reach away it cocked it's head expectantly.

"I-in the water?" Hannibal asked, before cursing himself internally. What else did he expect from a creature that inhabited the ocean?

The sun was starting to lower and there would be no more boats today, Hannibal considered briefly before removing cloak, and then his boots. All the while very aware of the creature's gaze.

His breath was coming in shorter and shorter gasps as he moved to the edge of the rocks. He had rarely felt as out of control as this. Not even when he had been intimate with people, it had been pleasurable but it had not made his heart race like this.

Whatever *this* was.

He allowed himself to slip down into the water. It was a little cooler for the fact that the day was drawing in, but still warm enough not to be unpleasant as it soaked through his clothes.

As Hannibal lowered all the way in, treading water with his back to the rocks, he wondered what would happen next. But before the thought was finished the creature was before him. It had moved so fast Hannibal had barely registered it, though the water was now rippling and ebbing in its wake.

They were mere inches apart and Hannibal could smell the salt on the creature's skin.

It leaned in tentatively and sniffed at him, then pulled back and looked him over. Hannibal wasn't sure he dared do the same, staying as still as he could.

The creature's hands came up to his arms and took a gentle hold of him, slowly leaning in and pressing his cold, wet lips against Hannibal's before retreating again so that he was once more out of reach.

"You're very warm," it noted, touching its own fingers to its lips, "I saw some people on a boat do that once."

"Kissing," Hannibal supplied. "It's what people do when they… like each other… when they are attracted to each other."

The creature blinked, wide-eyed once more, and all Hannibal could think of was feeling those lips again. Perhaps the creature knew or sensed it somehow because it raised a brow and it's lips drew into a smirk.

"You liked it?"

"Yes," Hannibal replied quickly and breathlessly.

"I did too…" It replied thoughtfully, slowly moving towards him again. "Is this like intercourse? Like with the farmgirl and the fence maker?"

Hannibal felt his whole body shudder and he was sure his face had started to go red. Not least because the conversation had allowed for a better look at the creature, and most notably the sharp teeth that could likely eat a man.

"Perhaps…" he ventured. "Not yet… This was kissing… sometimes kissing leads to… more."

The creature frowned, “But they were different…”

“From you? Yes, very,” Hannibal breathed out the words.

The creature shook its head, “From each other… when you… you described how you lay over the farmgirl in the hay and thrust into her, but with the carpenter he thrust into you…” The creature recalled thoughtfully, whilst Hannibal felt his chest tighten and his face definitely redden with the knowledge that the creature really had been secretly listening to what he had said.

“Yes, their… anatomy was different.”

“What anatomy do I have?” The creature looked at him in earnest puzzlement.

“D-don’t you know?” Hannibal asked, a little perturbed by the fact that - despite the thread of this conversation - he could feel himself becoming aroused.

The creature cocked it’s head.

“When did you know what your anatomy is?”

Hannibal couldn’t help but be charmed by the way it pronounced anatomy so carefully, clearly the first time it had ever heard the word.

“I… I don’t know. I guess I’ve always been aware…” Hannibal wasn’t sure what else he could say.

“If I kiss you again will you know? When you spoke of your virginity you said that kissing made you aroused and hard for thrusting… So… will kissing help?”

Hannibal barely stifled his groan of mixed embarrassment and arousal as he lifted his hand to cover his face in mortification.

“Hannibal… Your scent has changed… I… I like it.” The creature commented.

And then it was right in front of him again, as he lowered his hand and looked into eyes as deep as the ocean. His breath caught again and before he could take another, lips were back on his.

The kiss was tentative again, initially. But then Hannibal opened his mouth and for a moment the creature pressed the length of its body against Hannibal’s and opened against his lips, their tongues touching before it retreated again, looking a little bashful.

“I’m sorry…” Hannibal began to apologise but the creature was moving back towards him.

“I just… didn’t know what to expect. But I liked that too… and I like this…” The creature was so close now, it took Hannibal a moment to register its hand was slipping between them before it pressed a palm against Hannibal’s rapidly swelling cock.

Hannibal took a sharp breath and jerked backwards at the unexpected touch, nearly knocking the air out of his lungs as his back slammed against the rocks.

The creature seemed a little amused, its mouth pulling into a small smile that nonetheless showed its sharp little teeth.

Hannibal couldn't help but return the smile the whole moment it took for them to be kissing again. And this time the creature pressed him up against the rock, slipping its arms around his neck and grinding its body against him as if by instinct.

It was only then that Hannibal really let himself consider anatomy. Not least because this seemed like a rather untoward thing to be doing. But his more immediate thought was to the creature's gender - to the practical applications.

Pressed together as they were, the flat chest didn't appear to have breast tissue one might expect of a woman. Though he'd seen many a woman who had a small chest. In truth he cared little whether the creature's anatomy was male or female, he simply wished to be prepared.

The thought had barely formed in his mind when he felt something hard dig against his hip.

And the creature was retreating again, much further this time and looking gravely concerned. It flicked it's tail about in agitation and behaved as unsettled as it's expression implied.

"Are you alright-"

"It's doesn't always do that… sometimes it has…"

Hannibal realised then that the creature's hands were under the water covering something. Covering its penis. *His* penis?

Hannibal shook his head, trying to dismiss the concern as he held out a hand.

"It's alright… that's the same as my… the hardness you felt. Because I like you and enjoy kissing you."

His eyes darted around a moment before landing on Hannibal's, the concern still there.

"Male anatomy," Hannibal supplied in an attempt to help it - him - understand.

"For… thrusting…" the creature considered, clearly deducing from words previously spoken.

Hannibal swallowed and nodded, "Yes… It can be for thrusting."

The creature nodded, and looked down.

Hannibal followed its line of sight, finding himself desperate to fully glimpse beneath the water and between fingers to know what the creature looked like.

It must have caught him staring because Hannibal heard it swallow nervously before saying, "It has only done this a few times before… um, come out. But, um… I like it."

Hannibal nodded, able to see enough to steal his words as the creature began to masturbate itself. The penis becoming longer as he did so, fully extruding from where it had been sheathed. Hannibal could make out enough of the shape to know it wasn't human. It was thick

at the base and then tapered almost to a point. Like that of a whale or porpoise, if the anatomy books he had read were correct.

His own cock throbbed and his hole clenched at the sudden thoughts racing through his mind,

The creature looked up at that, scenting the air again and smiling as it started to drift back toward him.

That warm-cold body was against his again and he opened his mouth with a moan at the feeling of the near-tentacular hardness that pressed against his groin, only for the creature to capture him in a deep kiss.

Arms grew tight around him so that Hannibal thought he might not be able to breath. The creature held him in place as he began to rut against him, and Hannibal couldn't help but do the same. The water around them sloshing against the rock as they ground their hard lengths together.

The creature drew back, panting, looking pleasured but bewildered.

"Thrusting…" It muttered.

Hannibal groaned.

Chapter 2

Chapter Summary

Coming together and separation

Their hard lengths had ground together and the creature had drawn back, panting, looking pleasured but bewildered.

"Thrusting…" It muttered and Hannibal wasn't sure if it was a question or a request, but the whimper that followed suggested he didn't have the friction he needed.

Hannibal reached a hand down and let out a low groan as his fingers slipped around the creature's erection.

It was thick and fleshy, moist to almost be slimy even in the water, as though a resistant lubrication coated it. Hannibal circled his hand around the tip and let the creature thrust up into it as he continued to cling to Hannibal.

Each thrust put more the length through Hannibal's fist, up to almost two thirds before it became too wide to do more than stroke rather than circle, and the creature began to whimper again.

"I want…"

Hannibal wasn't sure what it wanted. Wasn't sure it knew either, other than to climax. And Hannibal wanted that. Wanted this gorgeous creature to experience that intense pleasure with him. Wanted to give it that pleasure.

Hannibal let out a shuddering breath and released the creature despite another protesting whimper, reaching to loosen his breeches. The belt was tight and hard to undo in the water, thick and water logged as it was. But then the creature seemed to understand and took hold of belt and breeches both, tearing them open with a strength unexpected of such a small stature.

Hannibal swallowed and hiked the clothing downwards, his underwear too as he turned against the rock, and looked over his shoulder.

"Please… thrusting…"

The creature bit it's lower lip and looked equal measures nervous and aroused.

Hannibal faced forward again, letting out a shuddering breath as he reached back and pulled his cheeks apart, He wasn't sure at first if the creature would see or understand, but then there

was a low moan from it and Hannibal braced himself as best he could whilst trying to remain relaxed.

He felt the water surge behind him and then gentle hands touching him, feeling the shape of his buttocks and the crevice between. cold fingers swiped over his hole and he shuddered. They both did.

"Thrusting…" He heard the quiet, thoughtful word behind him a moment before the hands left his skin.

He was trembling, surely he was sweating but the water hid it in the gently lapping waves that covered up to his chest.

A chest that a hand now slowly slid around. And a moment later there was pressure, the blunt but narrow head of the creature's cock pressing against his hole for just a moment before it slipped easily inside.

The creature gasped and he could feel the water being moved around them as it moved its tail to propel itself gently forward. Slowly, very slowly inching into Hannibal.

He gasped and leaned his head forward, shaking and grunting as he was further breached, further spread as the cock became wider and wider.

He wasn't sure he would be able to take all of it until he he realised he must have - feeling the cold, rough press of the creature's lower half against his own. And the other arm snaked around him as the creature buried it's face at Hannibal's neck, it's hands now circling his chest and holding him close - back to chest.

Hannibal felt so full, so good. The creature wasn't thrusting but he could feel him moving inside. The tapered end coiling, moving and pressing like he imagined a snake might. Each movement stoked pleasure within him as it pressed against that part off him that the carpenter's son had discovered and he took pleasure in sometimes by his own hand.

The creature let out a soft sigh, and sharp teeth nuzzled at Hannibal's neck.

"This is nice…" The creature spoke softly, snuggling tight against Hannibal.

As he pulled them closer together his hips moved in a tiny thrust and Hannibal felt the pleasure ripple through the creature.

"Thrusting," Hannibal explained and swallowed, waiting for what was to come.

He hadn't realised his own erection had flagged until he began to harden again.

The creature let out a little gasp as he pulled back just a little and pushed back in, slow and experimental. He repeated the motion, once, twice before letting out a whimper.

"You can move… thrust…" Hannibal encouraged, his cock now throbbing as he took it in hand.

The creature did as invited, pulling back slowly again but then pushing back in faster. It felt deeper though Hannibal knew that was just an illusion of the momentum, it made him shudder nonetheless. Made his cock throb and leak as he reached his free hand to clutch at the creature.

The flesh under his hand was not flesh. Not human. It wasn't the scales of a fish, but rough and silky all at once as he knew a shark or dogfish to be. The creature stilled at the touch of his hand and for a moment Hannibal thought he might flee again and was already whimpering at the thought of being empty. But then it began to move again, pressing deep before pulling back further each time, *faster* each time until he was fucking Hannibal into the rocks in front of him, only the creature's arms around his chest keeping him from the cold stone.

"Ung.. Uh… Yes…" Hannibal grunted and writhed, savouring every thrust as the creature slammed into him. So lost in it that he barely felt the teeth at his neck, sinking deeper on each thrust until blood was flowing down his chest and back, mixing into the now agitated water.

His hand was on his cock but he was too far gone, too overwhelmed by the sensation and the pleasure and pain to do anything other than hold it. But that was enough, as thrust after thrust drove him into his own hand.

And then the creature cried out.

It was not a human noise, and it was not a human event. The creature came, Hannibal feeling every pulse and coil within him and the delicious pressure filling his guts as he was filled with the creature's seed.

It took no more than that to cry out himself and spill his own seed into the water, clenching around the creature as he did so.

At that the creature sank his teeth in further, hips jerking forward and more seed flushing into Hannibal so that they were both near screaming.

Even as they stilled and panted, the water around them continued to swirl and flow from their motions, lapping loudly against the rocks as they swayed with it.

It was many minutes before the creature's member, hardly having softened as Hannibal was sure was its nature, began to withdraw from Hannibal and back into the secret, slitted orifice of the creature.

Despite the water, Hannibal felt the seed, copious amounts it would seem, flowing out of him and into the water to mix with his own. The thought made his cock valiantly try for stiffness that wouldn’t come again so soon.

When the creature loosened his hold a little, Hannibal turned in his arms, unable to resist another kiss and to let a curious hand understand better the shape of his lover. He slid it tentatively against the creature's sculpted abdomen and then down, seeking where the source of his pleasure had gone.

The creature stilled but then allowed it, nuzzling against Hannibal's now raw and pained flesh as he slipped his hand lower and lower until he found the slit the penis had emerged from. He rubbed his fingers over it, before pressing inside, expecting to feel the penis there. And it was,

it had to be, though perhaps further in than would be expected, because for all the world this felt like the part between a woman's legs.

The creature moaned and clung to him again.

Hannibal's heart raced as he pressed his fingers further in, finding perhaps the tip of the cock, but now it was just a nub, there in those slick-moist folds. He bit at his lower lip and slid his other arm around the creature's back, holding it close as he stroked his fingers over the nub and felt the creature shudder.

He repeated the motion, feeling the swell of slick in the folds as he did so. He let out a groan and considered what it might be to be with the creature this way as well, had he any chance of becoming hard again so soon.

Hannibal satisfied himself with changing angles slightly so that he could press his fingers deeper into the channel from which the slick was issuing, whilst pressing his thumb against the nub of the buried cock..

The creature held on almost painfully as Hannibal began to thrust his fingers in and out, drawing pants and moans from the creature as it writhed against him.

Perhaps a function of this organ, or perhaps because it was already overwhelmed from it's previous climax, the creature came quickly this way. Convulsing against Hannibal as it cried out and sobbed.

It was long minutes of gentle thrusts through the aftershocks of climax, before Hannibal withdrew his hand and they remained silently collapsed against each other in the water.

When neither of them could hold Hannibal’s exhausted weight anymore, the creature pushed him to the rocks and then helped him up onto them. Hannibal tried to pull up his breeches as he went, still feeling the creature’s slick issue running down the back of his thighs, more noticeable now out of the water.

When he was on the rocks, Hannibal fell onto his back, panting and waiting to hear the splash and see the flick of the tail that signalled his lover had left. But instead he heard the lapping of waves as the water was disturbed by the creature’s efforts to pull itself up onto the rocks too.

Hannibal rolled onto his side just as the creature flopped down next to him, with as much grace as a fish on dry land.

It rolled onto its back, practically in Hannibal’s arms, and he could really look up on the creature now. His chest was flat and smooth, his abdomen lithe rather than muscular, softer skin giving way to thicker, tougher flesh as it descended below the navel into the creature’s tale.

He could see the slit too, that place of all sorts of pleasure. It was almost hidden and he only knew where to look for it from his previous exploration. It was almost entirely concealed and Hannibal marvelled that such a large penis was retracted in there.

Hannibal reached down his hand to stroke stray curl's from it's face so that he could really look it over. He was sure his estimate was right, that this creature in human years could be no older than seventeen or eighteen. The same age he had been when he had lost his virginity.

The creature gazed up at him, not only allowing the touch but leaning into it until Hannibal's hand rested against the creature's cheek and arms snaked up around his neck and pulled him down.

"This isn't lonely," the creature smiled as he spoke and then pressed his mouth to Hannibal's in a soft, slow kiss.

*

Hannibal had never before known a time of such magic. Those hours in the water and on the rocks, first copulating and then idly exploring each other's bodies. He had been allowed to stroke his hands over cold flesh and memorise it, lock it away in little rooms in his mind to experience again later.

And then the creature had rolled him to his back and explored him. Slight hands running over his nipples, tugging on his chest hair, feeling the weight of his spent cock. In the end they had fallen asleep with the creature's face nestled against the chest hair that it seemed quite amused by.

But a few hours later as the wind grew cold, Hannibal woke alone.

That had been weeks ago.

And at first he had returned to the water and talked in the hopes that his lover would return, even if only to listen or talk. But he could sense that it wasn't there.

As each day wore on Hannibal felt all the lonlier.

The weather was turning inclement and the boats, though fewer, were attempting the straits during dangerous tides to take some of the late harvest for trade before it spoiled.

But then they were gone too. The waves were too high, the harvest all done. No boat would be venturing in from the ocean again until the spring. Hannibal was redundant other than the occasional check for anything floating in from the sea.

He need only go to the straits every few days to check, and so he did, even though most his life he had sat there daily regardless.

Hannibal would walk down, pace along the embankment and back again with his pole, pulling out the occasional flotsam that had washed in and then return to his house. Being by the water alone pulled a deep pain within him. One of abandonment and loss that he hadn't realised he could feel anymore.

Soon every other day became once and week. And then not at all, as Hannibal closed up his door for the winter, and made no plans to leave what little shelter that home gave him.

*

The waves dragged it to the beach. Some friendly sprites that flowed in the water in which it swam daily, no doubt.

When it woke it cried out in pain and grabbed its head, feeling the wet and searing pain there, and drawing a hand away with blood.

It took a moment for its eyes to become focused on the surroundings. A secluded beach, one of several it might name, and the high trees of the wood that started at the beach edge only helped narrow it down a little.

It blinked against the sunlight, and looked back towards the sea. The tide was going out and the sand beneath him was quickly drying. It was either this or the head pain that had brought it to consciousness.

It remembered being with the human.

Hannibal.

The beautiful lonely human that looked pale enough to be of the sea but was not. The human had a different body, one that it had excitedly explored after having been thoroughly explored. The thought of the thrusting and then the human's fingers in it's slit made it tingle all over.

It had been excited, it had wanted to spend more time with the human, but the rock was dry and so after a while it slipped back into the water and went back out to the ocean to spread its fins.

It wanted to return, it had planned to return. But all it could remember was big waves and a ship, and then pain in his head.

The creature tried to focus again on the water, ever further away. It would need to drag itself back into the shallows and beyond. And so it began, pulling itself along with only the sand for purchase.

Then there was more pain.

The creature cried out as pain shot through its tail. Burning and agonising pain that felt like flesh tearing, like being harpooned. It rolled in the sand, writhing in agony as it tried to reach down, its hands only coming away with great swaths of dried scales, as though it was shedding its very skin.

It felt like hours passed under the persistent sun, on the rapidly drying beach as the pain coarsed through the creature until it passed out.

When it woke it was night. Cold and dark.

It wasn't sure the last time it had been cold. It was always warm in the ocean, but now it was exposed, on the beach.

Exhausted and scared.

It must have passed out again because then there were voices waking it. Not the human's voice that he had come to know and enjoy immensely. Rougher voices and then a smaller one, near enough to make out.

"Who is he papa? Is he from the village?"

The rough voices replied -

"No, I don't recognise him…"

"Probably a pirate, tie him up before he wakes."

"Could he be from the Wolftrap? That village is less than a day around the coast."

"Where's his boat? If he washed up from a wreck?"

It squeezed its eyes shut, though that did nothing to block out the noise of the people talking, or the gulls crowing as the sun had started to rise.

"Papa, why is he naked?"

Replies were mumbled and then hands were on the creature. Stinging hands that it wanted to fight against, that it didn't want. It had only ever let one other soul touch its flesh and that was the lonely human. The one that he wished desperately to get back to.

The creature forced itself to keep its eyes shut, to go lax and pretend to still be unconscious. Besides it might need to save its strength once it was put back down, uncertain as to what awaited it.

*

"Will? Are you alright?" Abigail asked as she stood in the doorway of the parlour.

It - he - nodded.

"Just watching the sea," He replied, looking out the window. It was distant from the house but still visible. Sometimes he felt like he could hear the waves.

He felt Abigail come to stand next to him, thankful that she didn't touch. He didn't like to be touched and she liked to hold hands or otherwise gentle people, as was her way. It had taken her a while to understand Will didn't like this.

He had been with the Hobbs family for more weeks than he could count now. Time seemed to move so differently on land. And every day his thoughts were getting more and more confused. He remembered less and less of the ocean, and of the human he had befriended.

Man. Not human.

Will frowned as he corrected himself, shuddering internally.

When the fisherman had recovered him from the beach and taken him to the small fishing village, the man Hobbs and his little girl had taken him to their home. Louise Hobbs had nursed him back to health, mothered him really.

Because as fortune had it, she recognised him as the missing child of William Graham, a boat builder from Wolftrap who had worked on their fishing boats in the past. Alas, Graham senior had passed a few years after Will's disappearance, and she knew of no other family for it.

Him.

Will shuddered again.

It had never been a him before, not that it had ever recalled. And it was beginning to recall, as the days wore on and winter started to arrive, it could recall a time before the ocean.

A childhood next to the sea rather than in it. Knowing with every fibre of it's being that it was not meant for land. It wasn't like the menfolk and womenfolk. It was something else, always had been. A nymph, the fairy tales said.

Not a boy or a girl.

But now he was a boy. Trapped in this boy body, with the human penis like that of… of the human… his name felt so distant now.

"You want to go back to the beach, try and figure out where you washed up from." Abigail mused, and for a moment he'd forgotten she was there watching him.

He shook his head.

"I don't know. I… there was no boat. I don't know what I was doing out there. But I feel drawn…" He spoke absent-mindedly. Unsure in that moment, as was more often the case, whether it was all in his head that he'd had a tail and been at once both male and female and neither at all.

He'd had a blow to the head.

Louise had explained that over and over. They didn't know where he'd been the last eight years, but now he was here and he'd had a blow to the head.

Will wanted so desperately to go to the water.

"Will!" Abigail exclaimed and rushed forward to help him before Will had even realised he'd attempted to stand.

His weak legs gave way and he fell back into the chair with a painful thud despite Abigail, sweet child that she was, trying to catch him.

She let her hand stroke comfortingly over his back for just a moment before she removed it, knowing he would protest.

“When the weather is better, when the spring comes, perhaps father than help carry you down to the harbour and we can sit and watch the fishing boats up close?” Abigail offered, attempting to cheer him. “Perhaps by then your legs will be stronger and you can make the walk yourself.”

“Perhaps,” Will nodded and smiled, not entirely sure why Abigail thought he was so keen to get to the water.

*

The first week that there were three days together that the sun shone through the ever sparse clouds, Garret Hobbs declared it must be spring.

On the fourth day, Abigail insisted that Will go with her to the market along the harbour, where they could buy all manner of delicious things that were apparently more appealing than the types of fish her father and his crew brought home.

Will didn’t mind. He was glad to go for the fresh air and she was polite enough to wait for him as he moved slowly. His legs were still very weak, but now he could walk short distances with a cane and Abigail had assured him there would be places he could sit and rest along the way.

It was a long walk, longer than the laps of the garden or around the house, that he had made before. But it was pleasant and Will wondered if perhaps once his legs were stronger, he should start to help with the business. Either taking the fish to market with Louise and some of the other women, or going out on the fishing boats with Mr Hobbs and his crew.

Will bristled at the idea of either, despite his desire to be helpful.

Be a man. He should be a man.

He should join the crew.

“Will? You’re doing it again,” Abigail prompted politely as they made their way down to the harbour.

He shook the thoughts away and smiled at her, grateful that she would pull him backs in these moments of disconnect.

Or at least the moments where the deep disconnect he constantly felt, seemed visible to others.

Was it the loss of his family or being away so long? Was it not knowing what had become of him in all those years he had been gone? Will wasn’t sure what it was the caused the disconnect, or why it made his skin crawl and his heart race like he was afraid. Surely there were reasons enough in those eight years he was gone.

Trying to recall them now offered mostly a blank space with a few flashes here and there.

The ocean. Schools of fish. Boats. The handsome face of a stranger. Rocks. The feeling of rocks beneath him as he lay out...

Will took a sharp breath and shook his head. It was a moment before he was able to breath again.

"Will, rest." Abigail guided him to the low wall that ran alongside the path down to the harbour and seated him.

But it was not the weakness in his legs that had made him waiver.

It was the memory, surely a memory. Of a different skin, its own flesh as it lay there next to the human. A human so different from itself.

The memory stole his breath again and Will stifled a cry of anguish.

"Let me fetch mother-"

"No!" he protested quickly, "It was just a little pain… in my leg. It has passed now."

All the same Abigail made him wait a few minutes longer before she would allow him to stand and walk the rest of the way down.

As they grew closer to the harbour, to the water, Will's head started to ache. A pain that started in the now healed blow to his skull and radiated downwards.

Perhaps his mind was playing some sort of trick on him to associate the water with the pain he had felt the night he had been recovered from the beach?

Either way, he was not unaware of Abigail's watchful and concerned gaze, so he tried his best to let nothing show.

When they reached the harbour, the path curving around until it was alongside the water, there was no hiding the pain.

"Will, what is it?! Please… let me get someone," Abigail pleaded and sat him again.

Will was unable to respond as thoughts - memories - overwhelmed him.

Swimming. No, gliding. Cutting through the water at a speed faster than many a boat. Warm. The ocean was warm on its cold skin. Comfortable. Happy. But lonely. And then it had swam into the straits, curious about the little town within. More curious still about the human who sat alongside the water day after day. Curious enough to know the human better.

And better.

And…

Will cried out and squeezed his eyes shut.

It could see the human, pale but not of the sea. No, the human had a name. It recalled, there was a name…

“Hannibal Lecter?”

Will’s eyes shot open at the words, focusing in on the two women passing him.

“Is he dead?”

“No, I don’t think so. That poor man, after everything with his family though…”

“Oh yes, tragic. But he’s alive?”

“I heard that he’s not left that house in months, my sister is married to the brother of the doctor in that town and… The townsfolk have taken to monitoring the straits, that’s the main thing.”

The words drifted off as the women passed by and Will shook his head trying to understand.

There was a sick man? A man who hadn’t left his house?

There was a man.

A human.

His human.

Hannibal.

Everything went dark.

*

It was weeks before Will ventured out of the house again.

When he’d woken in his bed in the Hobbs’ home, Louise had been sat beside him with a cold compress on his forehead, removing it the instant she noticed he’d awaken.

“You very nearly fell into the harbour,” she had scalded gently, “I think you should leave it a while before you go there again.”

And he had taken that advice, bewildered as to what had made him feel so unwell. Perhaps it was simply that he wasn’t strong enough yet?

But as the weeks wore on his legs became a little stronger and he could go a little way without even the assistance of the cane, though he kept it with him just in case.

It was a bright day when he finally ventured beyond the garden wall again. This time without Abigail and running an errand for Louise. It made him feel useful, especially as it would likely still be some time before he could join the other men on the boat crew and properly earn his keep, much less repay their kindness.

He looked carefully where he was going to ensure he didn't trip, and stopped for breaks here and there to ensure that Abigail couldn't scald him later.

It really was a fine day and the breeze brought the smell of the salt water up to meet him a short while before he was even in view of the harbour.

It was a lovely smell. Rich and full of life, like the sea itself.

He wondered what it must be like to be out there day after day on the fishing boats. He was sure he'd enjoy it. If there were any memories he could firmly recall of his childhood before the years of darkness, it was a fondness for the sea. He knew his father had been a boat builder, so perhaps it had only been natural.

Will veered from the harbourside pass and into the little village, seeing Abigail in the distance at the gates of the school and realising that Louise must have timed his trip to post a letter through the baker's door, with Abigail's home time. She saw him and waved, coming running toward him excitedly.

"Will! What a wonderful surprise."

Will brandished the letter, "Your mother asked me to post this order to the baker."

Abigail smiled and snatched it from him, leading the way down one of the little streets towards the house Louise had given him directions to.

"Did you know this whole area has a very rich lore?" Abigail asked excitedly as they walked, though she didn't wait for an answer. "Miss Bloom was telling us today. There are all those legends about Baltimore Bay… that town up the coast where the harvest comes from. But Miss Bloom says they are all just old wives tales. It's just a very fortunate place, good resources, so over time places like that build up stories. But she says this whole part of the country has the same legends, we just don't tell them anymore like the people in Baltimore do. Superstitious she called them."

Will had nodded and added agreeable noises as she'd chattered on, unable to stop himself smiling at her infectious delight-

"Wait. What was that?" Will asked, trying to understand what Abigail had just said.

"About the sea children?" She repeated her last, "Apparently this whole area has this legend of children being stolen into the sea. I told Miss Bloom about you and she said it was fascinating. You gave her a… um, professional curiosity." Abigail was clearly trying to recall the exact words as she stopped in front of a house. "This is it." She announced and then took the letter from his hand and left him at the end of the path to walk down to the house.

As she handed over the letter and made polite conversation, Will couldn't help but consider the sea children. What happened to them when they went to the sea? Whatever it was, was that what had happened to him?"

When Abigail returned they proceeded slowly back to the house as she continued to excitedly explain more of the local legends.

Chapter 3

Chapter Summary

And they lived happily ever after...

Will woke in the middle of the night, its body coated in sweat that made it shiver and long for the sea.

He shook his head, trying to fully wake.

When Will finally opened his eyes he was panting and shaking. He grabbed for the robe next to the bed and pulled it onto him, immediately dampening it with his sweat.

He swung his legs around and placed his feet flat on the floor as he tried to calm his breath, tried to recall the dream that had made him react this way. But there was nothing but blank.

No, that wasn't true. The blank was an ocean. Waves ebbing and flowing gently in the darkness.

It should be terrifying, a sort of desperately lonely expanse, but it was comforting. Warm and welcoming. So why had it caused him to react this way?

Lonely.

Hannibal.

Will clutched his head in his hands as he was wracked with a splitting pain for just a moment.

The pain subsided, the sweating stopped and his breathing levelled. But Will was left with a strange desire to go to the sea. To look upon it as though his dream had been calling him there.

It would be light in a few hours, so he would wait until then he decided. Just a stroll.

But when daylight broke, he hadn't slept any further and made his way down to the harbour so early that even the fishermen were only just stirring.

Some called out greetings but he continued on, determined for no reason that he could discern.

His head throbbed as he made his way to the part of the harbour where he knew Hobbs kept his boats. Two large fishing boats and a rowboat.

Will wasn't sure why, but he cast off the rope for the rowboat and then climbed down into it, picking up the ores and setting out of the harbour.

In truth, he'd expected to be struck down with pain or illness as he had the times he'd chanced near the water. But instead, as soon as it was in the boat it felt calm, peaceful.

It felt at home in a way it hadn't with the Hobbs', as kind as they'd been.

It wasn't sure where it was going, letting the current take the rowboat and guide it as much as it did with the oars, until a familiar formation lay ahead.

Rocks.

A passage between rocks and shore, straits that lead to the secluded bay of a secluded town. Watched over by…

Hannibal.

Lonely human.

Lonely Hannibal.

It felt overcome with a strange agitation. Excitement and nervousness.

It felt a tingling sensation all over its skin and suddenly the boat felt alien and strange. It looked down at the oars in its hands and blinked.

"Ahoy!"

It startled at the voice and looked up, a boat heading towards it.

"Clear the way," The human called out from the bow of a larger boat, making a gesture for it to row towards the shore.

The embankment.

The rocks.

It focused on the oars again and began to row, clumsily now. The oars didn't feel right in its hands. Slowly it managed to maneuver into the straits and to the embankment, the bigger boat slowly passing by as it's row boat gently rocked in the wake until it bumped against the rocks.

The rocks.

It climbed out of the boat and dragged it as best it could onto the lowest rock, precarious. A large wave from a passing boat might wash it back into the strait.

But then, someone would take care of that. Ensure there was no danger for the boats.

Lonely human.

It scrambled up the embankment and looked around.

Land. Grass. A fence, made by a carpenter's son.

A house. Almost a ruin.

The creature's heart thumped in its chest and it let out a sob.

Hannibal.

It tried to run to the house but its legs buckled every few steps. Weak, still weak and now painful too. Light, shooting pains that made it stumble.

It felt like hours had passed when it was finally at the front of the house, panting and wincing. It practically fell forward into the thick door of the grand house, slamming fists against it.

"Hannibal… Please…"

Its legs gave way and everything went dark.

*

It woke in a dark room.

It was cold.

The ocean was so warm. Why wasn't it in the ocean?

"You're awake," The voice was breathless and it knew the voice.

"Hannibal."

It closed its eyes and let out a low sob as the human's soft hand stroked the curls from its face.

"Are you really here? I've dreamed of this so many times, am I asleep?" Hannibal's voice broke around the words, he reached over and lit a lamp before looking down at Will.

It reached its fingers up and stroked down the rough fur that hadn't before been on the human's face. Hannibal caught its fingers and pressed them to his lips before looking down at it.

"You're so warm, so soft…" Hannibal's words were wary, as though he thought it were some trick.

"I have legs," It found itself replying the obvious before letting out a sob, feeling the warm tear trickle down its cheek.

Hannibal pulled it up into an embrace, holding it tight to him as they had clung together in the water the day they'd copulated.

And so it clung to him again.

"What happened to you?" Hannibal muttered against its cheek.

“I don’t know…” It tried to recall. It remembered being away from the sea, being away from this place. Being amongst humans. It was all so vague and dreamlike.

It didn’t matter now, not now that Hannibal was laying the creature back down in the bed and laying next to it, holding it as they drifted to sleep in each other’s arms.

*

Will woke feeling stiff, his legs ached and he felt as though he had been in the same position too long. He attempted to roll onto his back but found there was someone spooned behind him.

There were only Garrett, Louise and Abigail in the Hobbs’ house and he couldn’t imagine that any of them would share his bed.

He moved swiftly away from the intruder and up to his knees, as much as they protested with aches, ready for hostility.

Will paused as he looked down at the figure in his bed. An older man, perhaps ten or so years older than himself, a scruff of a beard that was only just the right side of groomed. He wore worn clothes that had once perhaps been rather fine but were now aged and needed repair here and there.

And he was *so* familiar.

Hannibal?

Who was Hannibal?

The name popped into Will’s head and it felt like it fit.

“Hannibal?”

The man stirred, blinking his eyes opening and then his expression broke into a warm smile at the sight of him. Will couldn’t help the flutter he felt at the attention.

“I thought I dreamt you,” Hannibal’s words were rough with sleep and emotion and Will found himself not pulling back when the man reached up and cupped his face, pulling him down into a soft and oh so familiar kiss.

Will lost himself to the moment, opening his mouth to allow the kiss to deepen.

With the contact came memories.

It was as though he could taste the ocean in Hannibal, it could feel what it was like to press their bodies together in the water.

“Hannibal,” it breathed the name and clung to the human, remembering clinging to him before. It remembered before the human asking its name and it had no answer, but now it did. A fragment of information caught in the ebb and flow of his mind. It pulled back to look down at the human.

“I’m Will Gra…um... I’m… I…” it tried to recall the information that was drifting in and out of reach.

“Will? Is that your name?” Hannibal encouraged.

“Is that my name? Do I have a name?” It mused, unsure again, though it felt familiar and a little right.

“I think it might be. Do you… it’s nice to have something to call you.” Hannibal’s words and smile were soft.

Will smiled shyly, wondering what it might be like to have Hannibal cry out his name in pleasure.

It shuddered at the thought and moved against Hannibal until he was able to nestled against the human.

“I remember… Not everything. It’s all mixed up. I remember Will, but… That human isn’t me…” It tried to work through the disjointed memories and thoughts, like oil and water in its mind.

It stilled a moment when warm human arms wrapped around it, but then relaxed into the hold. Finding it didn’t so much mind being held by Hannibal.

“You’re here now, I don’t know how or why, and I’m terrified to ask in case I lose you again. But you’re here,” Hannibal muttered against its hair.

“I’m different,” it protested.

“I want you all the same,” the words came out a breathless chuckle.

“I’m human now…” it couldn’t help the quiver in its voice.

“We can be human together,” Hannibal countered, pulling it all the closer.

But it pushed back then, feeling the sting of tears as it shook its head, “I don’t want to be human… this body is…”

It let out a little sob and was pulled back to the human’s warm chest, as the human muttered words of comfort.

“This body is new to you, perhaps you need to get used to it?” There was no pressure in the human’s gentle words.

His lips pressed to its hair once more, then forehead. And then their lips were against each other’s again and the human was holding him so close. But it wasn’t enough. It wanted to know how it felt for humans to be together like this. Perhaps it was something he could do to stay with Hannibal, get used to this body.

It moaned into the kiss and Hannibal groaned back, moving over it so that they rolled - pressing it to the bed, with hard lengths between them apparent.

It broke back and looked at Hannibal, studied the human's face, knowing it wanted to stay with him. Of everything it did and didn't know, it knew that much.

"I want to… I want us to have pleasure… Um, thrusting," it said quietly.

It shuddered at the memory of being inside the human, how nice that had felt, but the thought of doing that with this body confused it to the point of discomfort.

Perhaps the human sensed its hesitation, because he peppered it with more gentle kisses.

"Whatever you wish," the human said before kissing it again. "But we don't have-"

"Was it nice? Before, was it?" It asked tentatively.

Hannibal chuckled, "It was very nice, I enjoyed it a great deal. But we-"

It let its hands roam then, pulling at clothing to try and touch the human's skin again as it had that day. Then Hannibal was pulling at the clothes too and his upper half was soon naked.

It couldn't help but run its hands over the contours of the body before him, less full than it had been before. Rib bones protruding slightly though before there had been able flesh.

It hesitated.

"Are you unwell?"

"My heart was sick… I was ill with loneliness. I stopped leaving the house and didn't take care of myself as I should have, but you are here now," Hannibal answered quietly, and it understood completely. Had it not had the Hobbs family's care then it might have suffered the same.

Thinking of both Hannibal and the Hobbs family in the same moment caused a sharp pain in its skull the reverberated from the injury it had sustained that had brought him to dry land in the first place.

"Will? Are you alright?" Hannibal asked but it was Abigail's voice it heard.

It shook its head.

"It hurts. This body hurts."

Hannibal pulled him close again, stroking his head and placing his hand on its forehead.

"You have a fever. What happened before you got here…"

"This isn't my body," the words ripped out of it in a hysterical sob. "This isn't my body, it hurts, please…"

It looked off and could see the window, could see beyond and to the straits. So close to the house, so close.

The rocks.

The sea.

The sea.

“I can’t stay here with you,” it let out a desperate cry. It thought it could. It had stayed with the Hobbs family but they had been further from the water, he had been Will then. Unhappy and wrong Will. But so close to the water it knew its true self. It needed to be one of the sea children once more.

It was barely aware of Hannibal standing and hauling it into his arms, and then the door was open and they were in the cold air and racing to the water.

It could feel Hannibal wavering, struggling to carry it in his own weakened state, his breath laboured. He stumbled more than once but Will was barely able to think about it as his mind was consumed with more memories the closer he got to the straits. Will’s father. The sea. Childhood. The sprites.

They’d played with him in the shallows, known what Will was. Not a boy, not a girl. Something like them. Something like all the sea children. And when the waves had washed up to his chest and they had taken his hands and pulled him under, he had not resisted.

He had been freed.

It was free.

The memories were jarred from it with a hard and painful jolt as it hit the rocks. It rolled, unable to stop the momentum and unable to see Hannibal. Only hear the thud next to it as the human collapsed or stumbled or fell.

“Hannibal,” it cried out for him a moment before it fell over the rocks and splashed into the water.

*

Darkness.

Everything was dark and painful.

He coughed and felt the blood well up in his throat, felt bones break and puncture.

He cried out in anguish.

*

Everything was dark.

The pain ebbed away into the darkness and it felt as though its skin, Will’s skin, was sliding away. It pawed at the manmade layers until they were shed, until it was free again.

It opened its eyes and it was light. The sun streaming through the water, penetrating the surface and finding it there waiting.

It was warm again, warm like the sea.

It flicked its tail and moved up, up again until it breached the surface with a feeling of pure joy.

It took a moment for it to see that it was in the middle of the straits. No boats, barely any sound. But a gurgling that was not made by water.

The rocks.

Its whole body seized in horror as it saw the broken human there.

It couldn't get there fast enough as it streamed through the water, feeling with each movement, the thickening of its skin against the tide, the unfurling of its fins. The feeling of rightness. The feeling of congruence.

But there was Hannibal on the rocks.

His body was still, smashed. He had fallen, weak and delicate human. He had fallen and now lay in a pool of his own blood. Head broken, body broken. Smashed.

Will let out a long cry of pain, it had never before felt pain such as this.

It clenched its jaw and moved to the edge of the rocks, where blood dripped down into the water.

Droplets splashed gently, spread until they were nothing but pink swirls.

"No… no, Hannibal…" Will dragged itself up against the rock, no easy way on this high a rock. But it was up far enough to see Hannibal's eyes as they fluttered shut and his last breath gurgled.

"NO!" Will screamed and pushed itself up enough to grab Hannibal and pull him bodily into the water.

"No, Hannibal… I understand now, I know who I am and I want you to be with me. Here with me…" Will clung to Hannibal's body, its tears flowing freely under the water.

The tug at its hand was unexpected.

Then another, and it took a moment to realise that Hannibal was being pulled from its arms.

"No…" Will let out a despairing sob. "Please don't take him from me…" it pleaded, as though it had any control over the will of the water sprites.

Hannibal was pulled away, floating in front of it. Will sobbed again, expecting the sprites to do as they often did with the dead lost at sea - to strip them down to their bones and bury them in the depths.

Nothing prepared Will for the churning of the water, growing all the more pink as it swirled. As Hannibal's body was knocked around as though the sprites pushed him between them. Rather than break him further, he seemed knocked back into place, less broken as the minutes stretched out between them.

It had to back up as the water swirled, becoming almost a typhoon, though it drew nothing towards it as a whirlpool might.

Will was breathing fast, its gills working almost painfully as it blinked and tried to see through the swirl of water.

And then it stopped.

It had once seen the sprites remove a harpoon from a whale and set it back on a course to upend the ship that had attempted to capture it. It thought of that now but didn't dare hope.

The water stilled but the bubbles and froth remained. Will watched as tattered clothes sank beneath the disturbed water, destined for the floor of the straits. It waited for the bones to come next, fleshless and no longer Hannibal.

But they didn't.

It closed its eyes as it felt the sprites reach out to it, they swirled around its body something like the soothing caress that Abigail had sought to give Will. That land-Will that was not right and was saved by these benevolent creatures.

It felt loved.

"Will?"

Another swirl, as though spurred into action. It could feel their intentions. Not a gift for Will, a reward for Hannibal. For his family's service to the water for the many generations that Hannibal was the last of. Fate.

"Will?"

The sprites were gone, nothing more than a ripple in the water, as the last of the bubbles rose to the surface and the very water felt pregnant with anticipation.

Will opened its eyes.

*

Hannibal flicked his tail and watched the school scatter.

It was the game a child might play, one he was sure Will played when it had first come to the sea. But he felt like a child now. He had grown up so fast with such responsibility upon him, he had never thought to play in this way.

Will chuckled.

Hannibal frowned, defensive but with a smile.

“How can you laugh at someone who has only had a tail for mere days?” Hannibal challenged good naturedly. “It’s very rude.”

Will huffed a laugh and shook its head.

“We’ll leave tomorrow, if you’re sure?” Will asked, clearly waiting for the moment to mention it.

Hannibal nodded, unable to help the slightly forlorn look. But he’d already made up his mind.

“This place… it isn’t home. It hasn’t been since I was very young. It’s all just ghosts and bad memories,” Hannibal spoke quietly as he looked in the vague direction of the straits. “The only good memory is you, you’re my home.”

They were quiet for a moment and then Will held out its hand, a look in its eyes that was easy for Hannibal to interpret.

When Hannibal had awoken under the sea, it had taken a short while to grow accustom. His body moved in different ways and swimming at first had only been possible when pressed against Will’s body.

Will who was warm now, only warm without the cold edges. Or maybe he was merely the same temperature?

They had made their way out of the straits and into the open water but not so far that they couldn’t look back at the mouth to the straits. And there they had slept wrapped together on the seabed. Where they had talked and stroked hands over each other’s flesh.

Hannibal was a darker colouring than Will, his tail a blue so dark at the fin tips that it was almost purple. He had a stockier stature, as had been the case as a human, but now in the water there was a stark contrast. Will looked almost petite compared to him, which was deceptive given Will’s incomparable strength that Hannibal knew had come with living in the sea for so long a time.

Hannibal took Will’s hand, letting out a shaky breath that worked his gills in a way that was strange to him at first.

“I want… Um…” Will’s blush was obvious now in the water, now that Hannibal had eyes that could see it. His heart raced as he waited for Will to continue. “Um… thrusting…”

Hannibal let out a shuddering breath and pulled Will to him. He had absolutely no idea of the mechanics of this, but then he hadn’t when he and Will had copulated before.

“How…” Hannibal started to ask for Will’s preference, but his words stuck in his throat as Will’s hand slipped downward. The back of Will’s hand stroked over his belly and further down to where the thicker, scaled flesh began.

Hannibal trembled, already feeling something stir within him. Pleasure, but different than he'd ever felt before. Pressing and welling within. And then Will's hand slid against his slit and pushed down to meet the hardness beneath.

Hannibal groaned and looked down, Will's hand gently fondling him, encouraging growth. Hannibal stroked his own hand down then, curious as he slid fingers along his slit and found the form of it unexpected. He pressed his fingers against the seem and felt his own hardness, which made him groan again.

There was no inner channel as Will had.

Will's fingers slid against his and pressed down again. Hannibal groaned and gave an involuntary thrust against Will's hand which would have resulted in him drifting away, had will not wrapped an arm around him.

That was all it took for his penis to emerge, just the tip at first. The same as Will's though darker, a very slightly different length and width. And so full of sensations!

Hannibal writhed against Will's hand as it stroked over his cock, tugging lightly at it now and then as though impatient to have it fully revealed. The pleasure was intense, Will's hand glided by the same natural slick that coated Will's cock, making the slide of its ministrations all the more wonderful.

Will must have sensed that Hannibal was about to come, because it suddenly stopped, panting and flushed. Hannibal whimpered at the loss but knew there would be more to come.

Thrusting.

"I don't have… the same as you. Only a penis…" Hannibal frowned down at the new, impressive appendage.

Will chuckled lightly, little bubbles of water flowing up and breaking the surface.

"Of course not, you're a boy!" It replied and kissed him.

Hannibal tried to process the words, tried not to lose himself to the kiss as Will wrapped both arms around his neck and began to slide and writhe against him.

Will's body hadn't been right and the sea had taken him. Taken it. This beautiful creature.

The realisation hit Hannibal, the enormity of Will having wanted to stay with him though there was no way it could. The way it was clear that Will belonged to the sea. When they had first met Will had no concept of male or female as he had, but perhaps its time on land had taught it this. The thought made Hannibal's heart ache with a deep desire to always protect this siren, his beauty. His love.

Will's hand slipped down to the thick base of Hannibal's cock, unable to quite get its fist around. But that was unnecessary, as Will guided Hannibal's solid flesh into slick and waiting heat.

Hannibal cried out as he sank into that wonderful place within his lover.

Will's breath hitched and it clung to Hannibal all the more even as it started to move it's tail, propelling it a little so that their bodies slid together effortlessly in the water.

"Oh, Will… My Will…" Hannibal muttered against Will's neck, dragging his own now sharp teeth across the skin there and thinking to mark his lover as Will had done to him what felt so long ago.

"Hannibal…" His name was a plea, a devotion.

Hannibal wrapped his arms tight around Will and began to move with it in the water, thrusting as Will wanted. Thrusting himself deep into Will and knowing from the sweet sounds of pleasure at his ear that he was moving just right.

He could feel the hard nub of Will's retracted penis, the centre of his pleasure, pressed against his own cock as he moved in and out. He coiled and stroked, moved his penis in all the ways he could attempt, until Will was lax and moaning in his arms.

"Oh… by the gods…Will..." Hannibal exclaimed as his own intense pleasure pooled.

It was with little effort that Will propelled them gently until they were against the cliff face, Hannibal's back brushing against it a moment before he turned them. He pressed Will against the near sheer surface, finding a small knob of rock to hold for purchase as he began to fuck into his wonderful creature.

Will cried out and clung to him all the more, its tail now wrapping around Hannibal's own so that they moved as one on each thrust.

Hannibal tensed and thrust. Felt sharp nails at his back. Felt soft flesh under his nose.

He bit sharp teeth into Will's shoulder as he climaxed. He felt his cock thicken and pulse, spilling more than he knew could be contained within him.

Will groaned and convulsed, Hannibal feeling the clench of muscles around him and the squirting of Will's seed against the base of his own cock a moment before it leaked from Will and into the sea.

They held onto each other tightly, Hannibal letting go of the rock so they could drift aimlessly on the current, wrapped up in each other.

"This is all I ever wanted… for both of us," The words shuddered from Will as he realised he would truly never be alone again.

Hannibal gripped him tighter, his words barely above a whisper against this ear, "It's beautiful."

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